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WAR FOOD ADMINISTRATION
Office of Distribution
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April 1944

FACT SHEET ON BEETS

Objective

To increase the consumption of fresh beets during the remainder of the month of April.

The Problem

To market approximately 588,800 bushels of good-quality fresh beets (winter crop) in an orderly fashion through the normal trade channels. This represents a 40 percent increase over last year that must find its way into consumer channels by May 15. In other words, we have about 165,000 more bushels to consume than we had during the same period last year.

The fresh beets to be marketed will come mostly from Texas. Although most of them will go to market as bunched beets — three to five to the bunch — increasing quantities are being sold without tops in 50-pound sacks. The latter method is being used to save container and minimize transportation requirements, and it should be explained to the housewife that these beets are as fresh and tender as those with tops.

Background

American farmers, in response to the Government's request for 10 percent greater acreage of vegetables for use fresh, planted 21 percent more acreage of winter beets than they did in 1943 and 38 percent above the 10-year (1933-42) average. The yield of 150 bushels per acre this year compares with 140 bushels in 1943 and the 10-year (1933-42) average of 132 bushels per acre. The increased yields are largely attributable to favorable growing weather.

The heavy supplies of beets, combined with the plentifulness of competing vegetables, present a serious marketing problem that cannot be met by increased diversion into processing, including dehydration. Even when such outlets are utilized to the fullest, there still remains need for additional consumption of fresh beets. Distribution of these beets is good and they should be in plentiful supply throughout the country. As winter beets are not suitable for extended commercial storage, immediate increase in consumption is essential.

CONSUMER AIDS

Good beets are smooth and free from blemishes. Avoid flabby, withered beets, those with stringy roots, or a lot of leaf scars around the neck. Beet tops of good quality are young, fresh-looking, tender, and clean.

Beets in the Diets

When beets are young and tender — they're really two vegetables in one. The tops count as a green leafy vegetable — rich in iron and valuable vitamins. And the beet roots contain some vitamin B₁ and G.

Easy Beet Dishes

Good beet dishes start with boiled beets. To boil beets and keep their bright red color, leave on the long taproot and an inch or two of the stems. Cook in boiling salted water — about one teaspoon of salt to a quart of liquid. Boil in their jackets. Using a lid saved fuel and time. It takes about 30 to 45 minutes to cook young beets until tender. If water is hard, the beet color may fade. Save color by putting a little vinegar or lemon juice in the water to make it slightly acid. (Alkaline water causes them to turn bluish.) A quick dip into cold water loosens the jacket on a cooked beet so it can slip off like a glove.

Slice all but baby beets. Serve them whole. Flavor with meat drippings or melted butter or fortified margarine, and salt and pepper to taste just before you serve. For a little "lift," add chopped onion or onion top, or a chopped green pepper. Add a little spiced vinegar or a squeeze or two of lemon to the fat. Serve hot.

SPICED VINEGAR

To make spiced vinegar use half as much vinegar as sugar and heat until boiling. Add cinnamon, allspice, cloves, and peppercorns to the vinegar while it is boiling. Pour the vinegar over the sliced beets and let stand until cold.

HARVARD BEETS

1 tablespoon cornstarch	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup vinegar
or 2 tablespoons flour	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup water
2 to 4 tablespoons sugar	2 tablespoons fat
$\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon salt	3 cups cooked beets, sliced

Mix cornstarch or flour, sugar, and salt. Add vinegar and water and boil 5 minutes, stirring constantly. Add the fat and beets, and let stand until the sauce becomes red. Reheat if necessary.

SOYA HARVARD BEETS

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup sugar	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup vinegar
2 teaspoons cornstarch	2 tablespoons soya flour
1 teaspoon salt	1 tablespoon table fat
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup beet liquid or water	4 cups cooked beets

Mix the sugar, cornstarch, and salt. Gradually stir in the liquid from canned beets or water, and blend thoroughly. Bring to boiling point, stirring constantly. Cover and cook over hot water for 10 minutes. Blend vinegar with soya, stir into sauce and cook 10 minutes longer. Stir in the fat. Pour beets into sauce and reheat.

COLD BEETS

Cold beets -- either pickled or plain-cooked -- make good ingredients for salads. Dice or slice and combine with sliced, hard-cooked eggs. The red color makes a fine contrast with your salad greens and other chopped vegetables. Be sure to wait until just before serving to mix the beets with the other ingredients. If the beets stand, they will pass their color on to anything they touch. Beets and grated cheese are another good food combination.

BEET SOUP

To make a beet soup which is something like Russian Borsch, add finely chopped cooked beets to meat broth, along with chopped onion, carrot, or cabbage. Season with herbs and serve hot.

SAVORY BEET GREENS

Cook beet greens just as you would any other greens.

Wash the greens through several waters, and cook with a lid on in a small amount of lightly salted boiling water. As soon as the greens are tender -- drain and chop them. Season with fat -- and sprinkle over the top with little pieces of crisp bacon or salt pork. Or cook a little chopped onion in fat until the onion browns slightly. Mix with the chopped greens. Add salt and pepper to taste. For a "different" flavor, add chopped parsley, chives, or herbs just before serving.

